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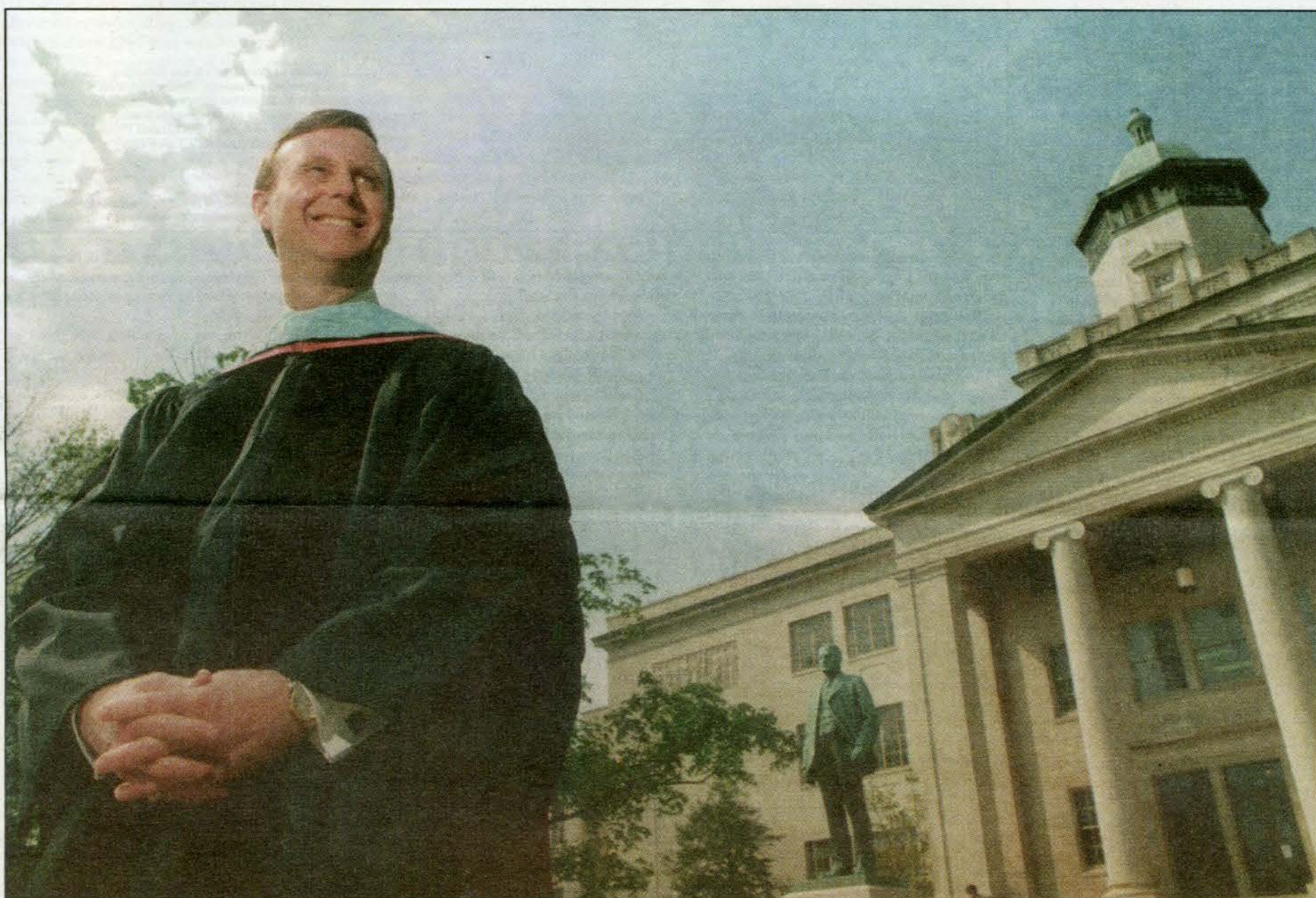
# INAUGURATION '98

*College Heights Herald*

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## *new* **b e g i n n i n g s**

Gary Ransdell will bring past to present as he makes his mark on Western's Hill



*Carrie Pratt/Herald*

### **Past, Present, Future**

91-year-old Hilltopper has  
known every university  
president  
*Page 3*



### **Through the Years**

Trace the rich history of  
Western's nine presidents  
*Pages 4-5*

### **Inauguration Symbols**

Mace, medallion bring new  
tradition to celebration  
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### **Up Close and Personal**

Ransdell has close relationship  
with family  
*Page 7*



# Celebrating Excellence

♦ *Inauguration events stress community, campus involvement*

BY BRIAN MAINS  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

If new President Gary Ransdell hasn't been sure how welcomed he has been at the university before this week, all his doubts will be squashed by the next.

"It is one of ours who's being installed as president," said Jeff Younglove, special events director, about the weeklong celebration surrounding the official ushering in of Ransdell as Western's ninth president May 8. "I think it will be a very emotional, special time for him and for anyone who claims to have the Western spirit."

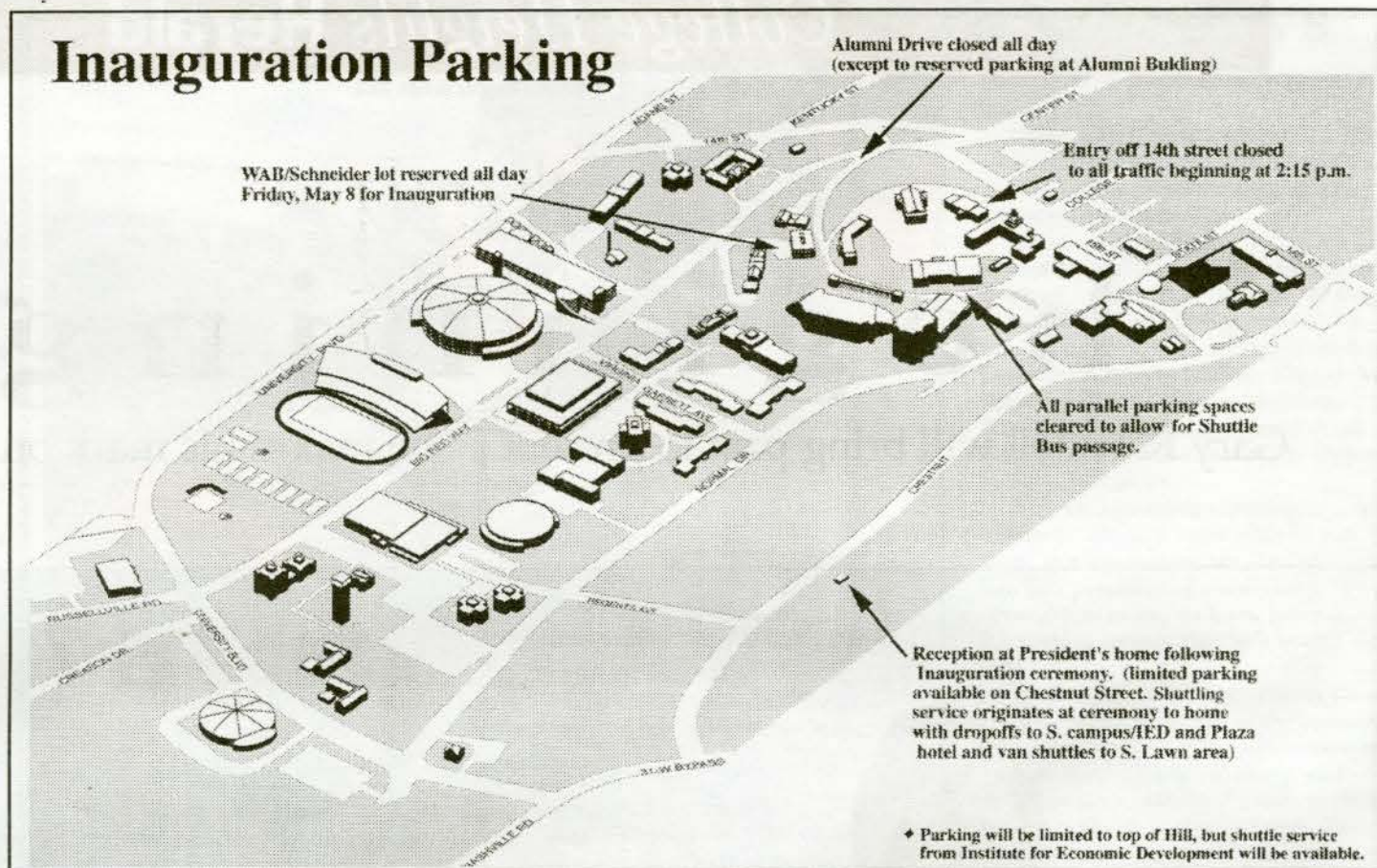
And with picnics and a plethora of opportunities to meet the president, any doubts the Western and Bowling Green communities had about how much Ransdell is glad to be here, Younglove said, will be cleared up as well.

"We really wanted the community involvement with it," Younglove said of what Ransdell and the university envisioned for his inauguration. "The goal was to maybe have each college to come up with something to involve more of the campus community — as well as the students."

To get that massive undertaking underway wasn't easy, though. The inauguration committee was formed in January to get different parts of the campus and community involved.

Julia Roberts, head of the committee, said untold hours were put into planning the events. Music had to be selected, a new mace and medallion had to be designed, and getting each department involved in some way had to be planned.

"People took different responsibility according to their interests," Roberts said.



"As an accumulation of hours, I couldn't even hazard to guess how much time was put into preparing."

"It's really an open invitation to come to all of the events. We're hoping people will participate in the events all week long."

And to attempt that, Roberts has helped make events everyone will enjoy. The community will be welcomed to watch a Western baseball game and a picnic afterward May 3.

There will be a showing of the theatre and dance department's production of

"Ghosts" on May 2, a ribbon cutting at south campus May 5 and other events throughout the week.

And the added draw for each event is the fact Ransdell will be present.

"He's going to be at as many events as he can," Younglove said.

And in return, Younglove and Roberts have planned on many kudos to Ransdell at his inauguration at the end of the week — greetings from the governor, other educators, faculty and students.

And to insure Ransdell's day goes off

without a hitch and with flair is Registrar Freida Eggleton, another member of the committee, who has been planning for months as well.

"She's the one who makes sure the T's are crossed and the I's are dotted for the event," Younglove said.

Younglove said for students, faculty and Bowling Green residents, this should be the highlight of this school year.

"It's been a fun event to work with," he said. "Ransdell will be there, and it should be remembered that this is his day."

## Inauguration Week Events

### May 2

♦ Theatre and Dance department presents Ibsen's "Ghosts" at Russell Miller Theater — 8 p.m.

### May 3

♦ Hilltopper baseball vs. Southwest Louisiana at Denes Field — 1 p.m.  
♦ Community Kickoff Event: Picnic with the president on Preston Center lawn — 3 to 5 p.m.

### May 4

♦ Athletic-Academic Dinner at the Bowling Green/Warren County Convention Center — 7 p.m.

### May 5

♦ Student Government Association's picnic with the president on DUC south lawn — 1 to 5 p.m.  
♦ South campus ribbon cutting at 2255 Nashville Road — 3:30 p.m.  
♦ Music Department Scholarship Concert at Van Meter Auditorium — 7:30 p.m.  
♦ Franklin Bank & Trust lecture, featuring Cletus C. Coughlin: Asian crisis: Origins, responses and consequences at convention center — 5 p.m.

### May 6

♦ College of Education lecture featuring David Imig at Tate Page Auditorium with reception to

follow — 4:30 p.m.

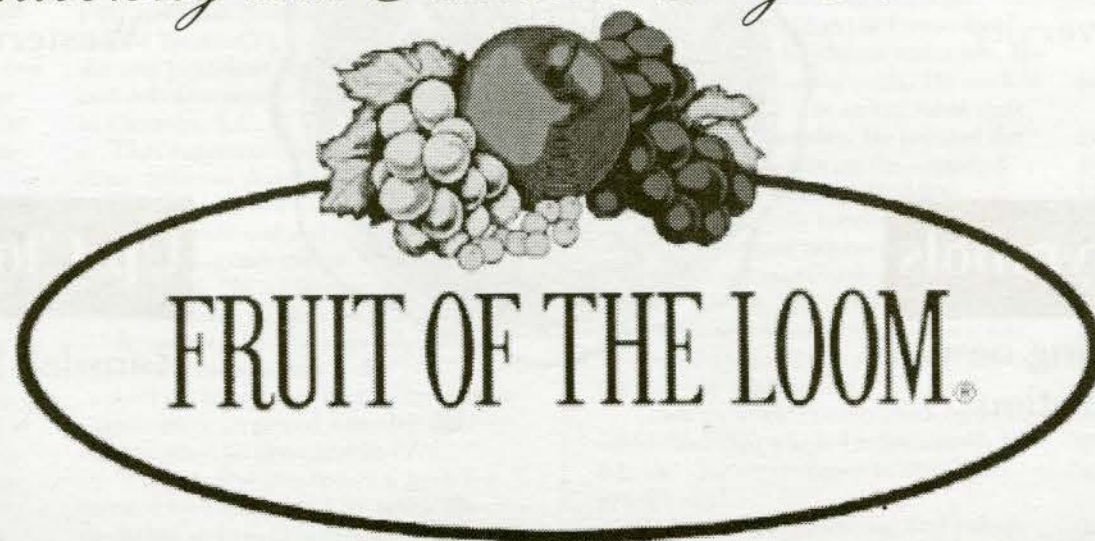
### May 7

♦ Inaugural meeting of the WKU Board of Advisors at Plaza Hotel — all day  
♦ Musical extravaganza and mace dedication at Van Meter Auditorium — 8 p.m.

### May 8

♦ Inauguration for Gary Ransdell — fine arts center amphitheater — 2:30 p.m.  
♦ Inauguration reception at president's home, 1700 Chestnut St. — 4:30 to 6 p.m.  
♦ Inaugural celebration on Preston Center lawn — 8 p.m.

*Fruit Of The Loom is proud to support Western Kentucky University and President Gary Ransdell.*





# Past, present, future

## Western's inauguration history is short but sweet

BY MISTY R. WILSON  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

An old tradition will mark a new beginning for Western and Gary Ransdell as he is officially recognized as the university's ninth president May 8.

Though inaugurations date back to early European history, the presidential inaugurations at Western began with Donald Zacharias, Western's sixth president.

Western's fourth and oldest living president, Dero Downing, said he did not have a formal inauguration, and his successor for about a year, John Minton, did not have one either.

Charles Anderson, vice president for information technology, has been at Western since 1967 and was a chairman for the 1986 inauguration of the seventh president, Kern Alexander.

"We had a dinner, luncheon inauguration and reception," Anderson said. "There were campus events during the week, and I think there was a concert."

Anderson also participated in the planning of the inauguration of the

### INAUGURATION

# 98

#### Celebrating Excellence

eighth president, Thomas Meredith.

"There were many parallels (in Meredith's and Alexander's inaugurations) and the same kinds of activities," Anderson said.

In planning the inaugurations, Anderson said the focus is not so much on the president as a person, but a focus on transition.

"Graduation is a transition point for the students just as the appointment of a new president is a transition in the university," Anderson said.

Steve House, executive director of the Institute for Economic Development, was chairman for Meredith's inauguration. He said inauguration is a celebration and a new beginning for the university.

"There's a sort of protocol to inaugu-

rations," House said. "We want it to be special and showcase the university. It's an official announcement that a new era has begun."

Ransdell's inauguration will follow a similar format to that of Western's past inaugurations.

Western Registrar Freida Eggleton said there will be a procession of delegates marching in, salutations and a formal investiture at Ransdell's inauguration, as well as the presentation of the medallion and comments from the president.

Anderson said though he has not seen the official plans for Ransdell's inauguration, it sounds as though it is very parallel to the two inaugurations with which he has been involved.

Ransdell will have something no other president has had at his inauguration: a mace. The scepterlike wand will be carried by the senior-most faculty member at Western, history professor Carlton Jackson as a symbol of authority.

Though Ransdell's inauguration will follow traditional inaugural etiquette, House said it will still be different.

"What makes it unique is the personality of the president," House said.

### ♦ Historical perspective ♦

Inaugurations of American university presidents descend from coronation rites and ceremonies of early European history. A king assumed sovereignty after a public gathering, typically by receiving some distinctive clothing or weapon.

The services took on religious overtones when Christianity spread across Europe.

In 973, Archbishop Dunstan contrived a ritual for the coronation of King Edgar at Bath. That investiture remains the official program for today's British coronation.

Imitating that formal British ceremony, in 1789 George Washington stood in front of Federal Hall in New York City, placed his hand on a Bible and swore to uphold and protect the Constitution of the United States; he added "so help me God" to the end of the oath.

Harvard University began the academic coronation tradition in America, though the ceremony is relatively simple by European standards. The installation of a university president represents a community's reverence for the past and hope for the future. It recognizes achievements and celebrates accomplishment.

## Longtime Hilltopper remembers past presidents

BY CHARLIE LANTER  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

Meet 91-year-old Col. Edgar B. Stansbury.

Here is a man who, in his 72 years as a Hilltopper, has known every Western president, has attended every Homecoming but two since 1961, and put the famous red towel in E.A. Diddle's hand.

Stansbury, a Shepherdsville native, started at Western in 1926.

He came to the Hill almost penniless and unmotivated.

What did he study?

"As little as I could get by with," he said.

Then Stansbury met Diddle, the man who changed his life dramatically.

After watching Stansbury play basketball with some friends, Diddle found him a job and convinced him to play for Western.

"From that day until he died, he was a great friend of mine," Stansbury said.

It wasn't until years later that he realized how good of a friend Diddle was.

In 1927 Stansbury took a full-time job and decided he wasn't coming back to school. Diddle came looking for him.

Stansbury said Diddle looked him in the eye, and then Stansbury knew he'd have to come back to school.

"When you got up close to Mr. Diddle

and you saw those blue eyes staring you down, you knew he meant business," he said.

So Stansbury played football, basketball and baseball for Diddle and returned



*You couldn't listen to (Cherry) speak without getting a vision.*

— Col. Edgar B. Stansbury  
former Hilltopper assistant coach

in 1934 as an assistant basketball coach.

As a student, Stansbury came to respect Western's founder, Henry Hardin Cherry.

In those days the college's nearly 900 students would file into chapel, as required, where Cherry would speak.

"You couldn't listen to him speak without getting a vision," Stansbury said. And Cherry rubbed off in other ways.

When Stansbury returned to coach, it was Cherry who gave him and his wife somewhere to live. They paid rent by taking care of the place.

Another former president, Kelly Thompson, also inspired Stansbury.

Thompson and Stansbury attended Western together.

"Most of the buildings on this campus are here because of him," Stansbury said. "That man could sell ice to Eskimos."

While coaching under Diddle, Stansbury was sent to recruit a local high

school basketball player.

He was impressed with the player, and persuaded him to play for Western.

That boy's name was Dero Downing, and the two have been friends ever since.

Downing said he is proud of his friend's connection to Western's history.

"Kelly Thompson was like a brother to him, Mr. Diddle was like a father, and Henry Hardin Cherry, well, he inspired everyone he met," Downing said.

It wasn't until his time as an assistant coach that Stansbury made his own significant contribution to Western's history.

At the time, athletes were stealing towels from the locker rooms and Diddle asked Stansbury to fix the problem.

"We decided we had to do something about those damn towels," he said.

So Stansbury had the towels dyed purple so they could be identified, a move that didn't work out like he expected.

The dye didn't hold and was turning the players' faces purple.

They tried again, this time asking the laundry service what color would not leave the players looking battered and bruised.

Red was that color, and it stuck.

Stansbury's relationship with the university was forever sealed recently when the concourse of Diddle Arena was given his name, after he promised more than \$1 million in assets to Western.

The money was a gift that Stansbury said he hopes will keep other students from struggling financially as he did.

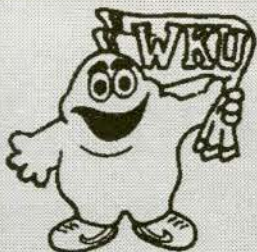
"My first year at Western I didn't have any money. None of the student-athletes had any money," he said. "I began thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if someone would give something to help the students out?'"

"And time went by and I began to think I might be able to do this."

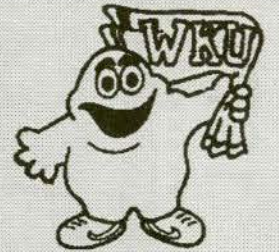
Stansbury now lives in Largo, Fla., but visits Bowling Green every fall because he said coming back to Western means he'll make new friends.

And while most of the people who were here while he was gone, either having moved on or died, Stansbury keeps coming back.

"It still feels like home."



*Wishing Western Kentucky University  
and President Gary Ransdell continued success.*



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## Henry Hardin Cherry

### Who he was

- ♦ Born Nov. 16, 1864.
- ♦ Western's first president and oversaw the institution's move to the Hill.
- ♦ Revered by friends and colleagues, remembered as a great motivator.
- ♦ Credited with coining the phrase "the Spirit Makes the Master," now the Western motto.

### What he did

- ♦ 1922 — School becomes known as Western Kentucky State Normal School and Teachers College.
- ♦ 1927 — Ogden College becomes part of Western, giving the school the basis for a science department.



# Throug

1906-1937

### Who he was

- ♦ Born Nov. 2
- ♦ Considered appointee to the presidency by then A.B. "Happy" C
- ♦ Known as a and sports fan

## John Minton

### Who he was

- ♦ Served as interim president from Jan. 8 to July 31, 1979. To recognize his service, the Board of Regents later declared him president for that time.



1979

1969 -  
1979

## Dero Do



## Don Zacharias

### Who he was

- ♦ First president of Western ever to be inaugurated.
- ♦ Received his master's and doctoral degrees from Indiana University.

### What he did

- ♦ 1980 — A director of development is named for the first time in Western history.
- ♦ 1982 — Western joins the Sun Belt Conference.



1979-1985

## Kern Alexander

### Who he was

- ♦ Born in Marrowbone in 1939.
- ♦ Now president of Murray State University.

### What he did

- ♦ 1987 — Western's enrollment increase is state's largest.
- ♦ Western opens extended campus location in Glasgow.



1985-  
1988

## Thomas Me

### Who he was

- ♦ Became Western's eighth president in August 1988.
- ♦ Left Western to become chancellor of University of Alabama system.





# h the years

1937-1955

## Paul Garrett



### What he did

- ♦ 1948 — School becomes Western Kentucky State College.
- ♦ 1946 — Western purchases the Rock House; it becomes a men's dorm.
- ♦ 1949 — McLean Hall is built and used as a women's dormitory.

## Kelly Thompson



### Who he was

- ♦ Born Jan. 28, 1909.
- ♦ Came to Western as a football recruit, but injury kept him from ever playing.
- ♦ Credited with expanding Western's enrollment and its campus.

### What he did

- ♦ Twenty new buildings went up from 1955-1965.
- ♦ 1964 — Western's four colleges are established.
- ♦ 1966 — Western achieves university status.

## wning

### Who he was

- ♦ Born in Monroe County in 1921.
- ♦ Known for his dedication to keeping the campus free of trash and litter.

### What he did

- ♦ 1969 — Parking structure completed.
- ♦ 1971 — Fine arts center opens.

1955-1969

## GARY RANSDELL PRESENT

### Who he is

- ♦ Forty-six years old, grew up in Louisville.
- ♦ Most of his experience in higher education has been fund raising and development.
- ♦ Wife is Julie, and sons are Patrick, 18, and Matthew, 14.
- ♦ Graduated from Western in 1974 and was associate director of Alumni Affairs here.
- ♦ Was on the committee that initiated and developed a mascot for the university, an idea that became Big Red.



### What he's done

- ♦ Kentucky General Assembly in January approved plans for an \$18.5 million Journalism/Technology Building.
- ♦ In February, Western's football team received a \$3 million endowment, the largest cash gift ever given to Western.
- ♦ Has begun the drive to move student seating closer to the floor of Diddle Arena.
- ♦ Western's administrative structure reorganized in December, creating positions of provost and vice president of development.

1988-1997

## redith

### What he did

- ♦ 1992 — Preston Health and Activities Center opens.
- ♦ 1996 — Meredith releases "Moving to a New Level," his vision plan for Western's future.



# symbols of a celebration

## Mace brings tradition, feeling to ceremony

BY MISTY R. WILSON  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

Along with a new president comes many new goals, hopes and traditions. The incorporation of a mace into inaugural ceremonies is a tradition beginning with Gary Ransdell.

The mace, a stafflike construction originally used as a medieval weapon, is now a symbol of authority. It is also used at many universities around the world to represent an institution's authority to grant degrees.

Registrar Freida Eggleton proposed the idea of incorporating the mace in Western's ceremonies to Provost Barbara Burch, and after a few e-mail messages were sent across campus looking for help, the dream of the new power symbol soon became a reality.

Burch, Eggleton and faculty members John Warren Oakes, Terry Leeper and Frank Pittman sat and discussed possible options for the mace while looking at maces from Murray State University, Vanderbilt University and Cumberland College.

While others spoke about what should be included in Western's mace, Oakes sat and sketched their ideas.

"We wanted something that represented Western well and looked appropriate for the occasion," said Oakes, an art professor for 32 years. "That's why we chose the lantern of Cherry Hall for the top."

The lantern and the body made of



Rick Scibelli/Herald

Industrial technology professor Terry Leeper works on Western's mace.

cherry wood is a tribute to Western's founder and first president, Henry Hardin Cherry.

Raised carved bands with significant dates in Western's history inhabit the shaft of the mace, while jewels embedded in the lower portion of the staff represent the different colleges of the university. The university seal is included, and a ball is at the base, symbolizing Western's alumni around the globe.

Oakes said he was happy to be the designer of the new mace and he thinks he knows why he was chosen to sketch

the design.

"Just sheer talent," Oakes said with a laugh.

Leeper and Pittman, both industrial technology professors, turned Oakes' sketch into reality.

Leeper said he feels he was chosen as one of the makers of the mace because of his woodwork experience. He said he and Pittman completed the mace in about five weeks by using spindle turning and lathing, which is the process of turning something square into something round. It's similar to how baseball bats

are made, Leeper said.

"I'm happy that I could be involved in this joint effort between different departments on campus," he added.

With the completion of the mace, only one question remained: Who will carry it?

"Typically, the senior-most faculty member carries the mace at the beginning of academic processions," Eggleton said.

That person is history Professor Carlton Jackson, who has taught at Western for 37 years.

Jackson said he thinks the incorporation of the mace into the inauguration is a good idea and is proud to be leading the procession.

"I have been associated with the university for many years, and I am proud to be associated with Western," Jackson said.

"They have provided funding for my research, and anything the university could have done for me they have done."

Jackson also said he is looking forward to the inauguration, but he has one concern for the ceremonies.

"As long as the speeches aren't too long," Jackson said.

Eggleton said the mace will take a prominent place on the stage during the inauguration. But what will happen to Western's new symbol of authority when it's not in use?

"It will be on display when not in use and will be used in every commencement and inauguration from this point forward," Eggleton said.

## REDESIGNING HISTORY: Medallion gets new look after 90-plus year history

BY BRIAN MAINS  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

Every institute has its symbol. Superman has his famous S, McDonald's has its arches, and Gary Ransdell will soon have his silver medallion, which is also the university seal.

For Ransdell, May 8 will be the first time he wears a presidential medallion, representing a university. For Western, it will be the first time in its 90-plus year history it will have the official university seal set in something as priceless and timeless as silver.

But that's not the only reason the medallion has been changed, said Julia Roberts, chairwoman of the committee over-seeing the inauguration.

"The truth of the matter is, have you

seen the current medallion?" Roberts asked. "The current one we have simply isn't a medallion. It does look like we're at a point we need a real medallion."

What Roberts is talking about is a 2 1/2-pound paperweight with a loop for a chain that the new medallion will replace.

"This was all that was there," she said. "It would make me hump over to wear it. I mean it was difficult."

Library assistant Pam Wright helped in the decision-making process for the new, lighter model which was made at a jeweler in Virginia Beach. She said the university will be receiving one other thing besides a new piece of jewelry — a legacy.

"The new one will be handed down from president to president," Wright said.

In the past Roberts said presidents couldn't be sure what kind of medallion they would be handed the day of their inaugurations.

"There have been some fairly makeshift medallions," she said.

One of note was a papier maché medallion mentioned in university archives that rang in a new Western president sometime in the past, Wright said.

As far as which president wore what during his inauguration, Wright admits the university has "very little on it."

What is known about the medallion is the first was created in 1911 for the Normal Teachers College. It had the motto "Life — More Life," the words "teachers college" and an unidentified building on it.

In 1926 a new medallion was struck

for the Western Kentucky State College, where the unknown building was replaced with a scale, "education" replaced "teachers college," and the now familiar words of "Spirit Makes the Master" were added.

Then in 1948 the current seal was born. The familiar mottos of "Life — More Life" and "The Spirit Makes The Master" were accompanied with an image of Cherry Hall and the title Western Kentucky University.

Since then no one has debated replacing the university seal or medallion.

The old seal represented by a new medallion will mark a new tradition and be a new symbol of inaugural pageantry. "We have a lovely history, and we are further emphasizing our historical background for the future," Wright said.

**Good luck to Western Kentucky University  
and President Gary Ransdell.**

Michael and Mary Proctor  
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President Gary Ransdell.*

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# Up Close and Personal

## Strong ties bind the Ransdell family together

BY SHANNON BACK  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

President Gary Ransdell has lived alone since he was named Western's ninth president in November. But a day hasn't gone by that he hasn't talked to his wife.

"Late-night phone calls are a poor substitute for sharing events of the day in a personal way," he said. "It's been so much more difficult than I expected."

When Ransdell accepted the position as Western's president, he left his position as vice president for Administration and Advancement at Clemson University in Clemson, S.C., where he had worked since 1987. His wife Julie and sons Patrick, 18, and Matthew, 14, stayed behind so Patrick could finish his senior year.

"Some people take their children out of school their senior year; we've sacrificed about seven months," Julie Ransdell said. "But that's nothing compared to his senior year. He'll thank us for it later."

These days aren't easy for Julie. Three days a week she's Mrs. Ransdell, the substitute teacher at area elementary schools. Every minute in between she's mom and dad, washing baseball uniforms, cooking and sculpting the yard for potential home buyers.

"It gives me a whole new appreciation for single mothers," she said. "We chose to do this; a lot of women have no

choice."

Julie and Matthew are planning the move to Bowling Green for the first week of June. Patrick is dreaming of college; with less than a month before deadline, he is still undecided. His top choices are Clemson, the University of Kentucky, Western and private schools in South Carolina.

When the Ransdells are under one roof again, Julie and Gary will be back in the town they began married life and back to the college where they met.

Julie and Gary met their sophomore year at a Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity party and married two years later. In May 1973 they graduated, Julie with a degree in elementary education and Gary with a degree in mass communications.

Immediately after graduation Gary went to work in Western's University Relations office. Julie taught fourth, fifth and sixth grades in Russellville and later in Hiseville.

From 1978-81, Gary was associate director of Alumni Affairs at Western. Then he moved to Southern Methodist University and was director of Alumni Relations from 1981-87. From 1987 until last November, he worked at Clemson.

President Ransdell makes the seven-hour trip to Clemson about every two to three weeks. He said he plans his trips around his sons' baseball games, something he never missed while living in Clemson.

In between tales of 30 daily e-mails



Christine DeLessio/Herald

The Ransdells and their oldest son, Patrick, share a moment at their home last October.

and meetings with the governor, Gary's eyes brighten and he brags of a more personal meeting.

"On Monday the 27th, I'll drive seven hours, get a hair cut and watch Patrick play his last home game," he said smiling. "I'll drive back that night."

Gary spends most days working from about 7 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. or midnight. He said he's gotten a lot of work done this year but at the expense of not seeing his family. Come June, there will be some changes in his schedule.

"I'll be spending time at whatever

baseball field Matthew is playing at," he said. "Being involved with his activities will take precedence."

Until then, Julie said she won't miss a game. She said the only way to cope with not having her husband to hug every day is the nightly phone calls and her busy schedule.

"The good thing is he doesn't have to say 'turn the light off' anymore now," she said with her voice cracking. Then she laughed. "I like to read at night, and now I can as long as I want."

"In seven weeks it'll all be over."

## A Herald interview with the 'big chief'

BY RYAN CRAIG  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

Gary Ransdell is a busy man. To know the real man, not the president, not the Western alumnus, he directed me to the 1974 Talisman yearbook to read what he had to say about himself way back when.

A younger Ransdell, sporting a butterfly-collared suit jacket, said he finds "each person is an individual; and to be a leader of individuals, one has to do more than just be involved, he has to be a friend."

The clothes might have changed, but the words haven't. "It still holds true today," he said.

Ransdell believes in the unity of his administration and the students; that's why he doesn't mind spending so much time working.

As a former staff member at the Herald (a little known fact), Ransdell understands a reporter's curiosity, so he took a few minutes to answer some questions.

Herald: "Do you mind if I call you the 'Big Chief' or the 'Guy in Charge'?"

President Gary Ransdell: "Well, I guess you can, although I'm not comfortable with it. My philosophy on leadership is based on teamwork, people working with people. Nobody works for an individual. We all work for Western."

H: "Do you have a nickname?"

R: (chuckles) "No. No, not yet. I'm sure that will come in time."

H: "Who is Gary Ransdell?"

R: "Somebody that grew up working for what he had. He understands the value of determination, the importance of determining your own outcomes. Nothing of value is achieved without causing it to be achieved in a predetermined manner."

H: "Everybody wants something from you."

R: "I've learned that."

H: "What do you want from Western students?"

R: "Commitment. Commitment to their own achievements, commitment to achievements on the

part of this university. Neither are short-term commitments."

H: "On a personal note, is your wife still in South Carolina?"

R: "They'll move up in June."

H: "Has it been hard being here?"

R: "Yea, much more difficult than I expected. Much more difficult ..."

H: "So you'll be glad when everything settles down?"

R: "Yes. It's been very difficult to enjoy the accomplishments, the excitement and the satisfaction of a day's or week's agenda. I'd rather have it with Julie." (Pauses.) "She hasn't been here to put it in context. We have two teenage sons, it's been very difficult missing my 18-year-old's senior year."

H: "How about the inauguration? Are you looking forward to it?"

R: "Yes, it will be a special moment for me personally, but more importantly it will be big in the life of the university."

H: "I had to ask. It's personal question time. Before, these were

nice, fluffy questions. If any of these questions bother you, tell me."

R: "All right."

H: "Before I start, do you know karate?"

R: (laughs) "No."

H: "It's just something I needed to know. Can you golf?"

R: "I play golf. I love to play golf, but I only get to play maybe half a dozen times a year. But I refrain from competitive golf games."

H: "Should I even ask your average score?"

R: "If I shoot in the middle 90s I'm happy."

H: "How about bowling?"

R: "I haven't bowled in years, and I guess I won't be bowling in Downing (University) Center for a while either."

H: "Favorite professional team?"

R: "Atlanta Braves."

H: "Good choice."

R: "Football: Carolina Panthers, because of a personal

connection. And probably the Utah Jazz, because John Stockton's my favorite player right now."

H: "Bagels or doughnuts?"

R: "Bagels, but don't tell my sons. They'd think I was nuts. They'd take doughnuts every time."

H: "Action movies or other?"

R: "Action movies. When I go to the movies I want to be entertained ..."

H: "Cars or trucks?"

R: "Cars ... Julie drives a Miata, and I like it. But since I've been back in Bowling Green my curiosity with the Corvette may overpower me. Hopefully my conservative side will win out."

H: "One last question, the ultimate presidential question: boxers or briefs?"

R: (Long pause, strange look.) "Briefs." (The interview ends with Ransdell laughing and all of us getting to know him a little better.)

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# Coming home again

## Fraternity brothers share memories of college days

BY JERRY BREWER  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

They had so much fun together, members of that Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity pledge class of 1971. Twenty-eight years later, some of it is "shh," some is "can't tell you that," but more than anything, it was just a bunch of guys living life and enjoying the college experience at Western.

As President Gary Ransdell prepares for his inauguration May 8, SAE brothers of Ransdell took time to reflect on those old days in the 1970s. They gave a glimpse of where Western's ninth president has been, what he has done, how he likes to do it and — perhaps — what he'll do for this university in the future.

All the brothers agree on this: He'll do just fine in this new position.

"When you say his name to me, it means old, dear friend and mature fella," says brother Kevin Brooks, now a Bowling Green lawyer.

"He's very genuine, very intentional," says brother John Ridley, now branch manager, senior vice president and investment officer at Bowling Green's Wheat First Union.

"He has always been very organized and very neat; his clothes were always hung in the closet," says brother John Minton Jr., now a Warren County Circuit Court judge.



Ransdell talks to Sigma Alpha Epsilon brothers before their annual run to Richmond prior to the Eastern-Western football game in October.

Ransdell, then a sophomore, decided to participate in Rush in the spring semester of 1971 after a few friends encouraged him. He went in with no preconceived ideas about which fraternity to join, but inspiration came in human form.

He said his deciding factor was "this really good-looking girl I met at an SAE Rush function." That was Julie Bush.

They married two years later.

Ransdell cared about his brothers, too. He was the one who championed doing away with traditional hazing methods, an unpopular decision for those times. He was the one who dreamed big and talked with his other brothers about dreaming big just before bedtime, in the day's last hours. He was driven, and that drove people around

him, the kind of contagious effect a leader has.

"That's what excites me to have him back in Bowling Green," Ridley said. "If given a chance, Western's going to be extremely fortunate."

Brooks said it was funny how life has worked out. Those well-intentioned pledge brothers — who lived through the long, shaggy-haired and free-spirited 1970s — have all enjoyed success, and many have become community leaders. That makes them proud. And they're proud of Ransdell, who is in a position of great influence — at the school where they made so many memories.

"It's an interesting experience to have a college buddy and know what he was like then, at a less mature age, and all of a sudden he's president of a university. We were around him more; we knew him better. But it's nothing strange that he's been a success."

On Dec. 30 of last year, reality hit many of these brothers as well as the president and Julie Ransdell. The couple were celebrating their 25th anniversary, and Ransdell invited his old friends to the president's home on Chestnut Street. There, as they all reminisced over dinner, the strange yet pleasant feeling hit them.

"It felt like we were back in college and we were having a party at the president's home while the president was away," Minton said. "This experience is new for all of us."

## Mintons stay close to Ransdell after 20 years of separation

BY SHANNON BACK  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

In 1976 a young Gary Ransdell left the Hill for graduate school at Indiana University with a head full of blond, curly hair and a promise to return someday as Western's president.

Twenty-one years later, John Minton Jr., a friend and fraternity brother, almost dropped the phone when he heard the news.

"Right before he left he told me he wanted to be president of Western, but I just filed that away in my memory," Minton said, recalling a nearly 20-year-old conversation. "I didn't expect he'd ever be back."

Minton and Ransdell first met in 1971 as pledges for Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. As roommates, the two spent the next three years getting to know each other in Room 5 in the SAE house. Late at night the two would share their concerns and problems; Ransdell on the bottom bunk, Minton the top.

The two were together when they feared the Vietnam War draft, and they were together when Ransdell sorted out feelings about his mother's death.

"For almost 20 years after that, he and I had contact through occasional phone calls and Christmas cards," Minton said. "I still felt very close to Gary. I still considered him my closest friend."

Now Minton, a Bowling Green judge, and Ransdell, Western's ninth president, are reuniting. Living just two houses from the president's home, Minton said it's nice to have his friend back.

Ransdell's family members, who are living in Clemson, S.C., until June, spent their first nights in the Ransdells' new home over Christmas. Minton said he's anxious for Ransdell's family to get acquainted with his own family for the first time.

Shortly after Ransdell and Minton met in 1971, Ransdell was introduced to John Minton Sr., then dean of Western's

graduate school and a history professor. Ever since, Minton Sr. has been Ransdell's mentor.

"He's given me very important advice," Ransdell said. "I talked with him about this job as I've done with every career decision I've ever made."

Before vowing to Minton's son he'd return as Western's president, he bragged to Minton Sr. he'd never leave the Hill. But the educator advised him to leave, saying "if you want to stay in higher ed, you have to get a doctorate."

After completing his degree at Indiana University, Ransdell returned to Western as associate director of Alumni Affairs, an office Minton directed.

Until the department's budget was cut, Minton said he and his fellow administrators planned to promote Ransdell. But because of money, staff members were let go and Minton once again advised Ransdell to leave the Hill.

"That's what sidetracked him, being away from Western," Minton said.

Ransdell moved to Southern Methodist University and was director of Alumni Relations from 1981-87. From 1987 until last November, when he was named Western's president, he served as the vice president for Administration and Advancement at Clemson University in Clemson, S.C.

That experience brings Western something different than ever before.

"He has a fund-raising view, a private university view and a view from a university with a big endowment," the elder Minton said. "In addition to his knowledge of old Western, he has energy and intellect — those things have always helped him focus on what he wants to do."

And it's because of that focus Minton said he isn't surprised Ransdell did exactly what he promised in 1976.

"I always feel good when a person I worked with succeeds," he said. "He probably gives me too much credit for being a mentor, but I'm just glad I had a part in his life."

## President more man than title

BY JERRY BREWER  
COLLEGE HEIGHTS HERALD

Gary Ransdell has that word "president" in front of his name, and everybody knows that is a loaded word. So many stereotypes.

Straight guy. A "suit." Cares about that boring stuff. Has heard of students but doesn't really know them. Always has an agenda, an angle.

Couldn't be a real person.

So, why not just name the guy No. 9 because he is Western's ninth president, not the first Gary Ransdell?

There lies the dilemma of Ransdell, a man who is the president. For a brief moment on a Tuesday morning — about 20 minutes — Ransdell took the sport coat off. He sat, put his arm on his chin, gazed into his past and talked about it.

One would think Ransdell's life began in college. But he, too, was once a child.

He came from Louisville. He grew up in Audubon Park, just a middle-class neighborhood. No champagne. No expensive suits. Ransdell's father, Gerald Donald (went by Don), was a plant layout engineer, and he was an advocate of hard work. Ransdell's mother, Anna Beth, never worked, never even earned a driver's license, but "if there ever was a saint in this world, it would have to have been my mother," Ransdell said.

Ransdell attended Durrett High School (now Male High) in Louisville. And from 14 on, he always had a job. He helped build swimming pools. He worked in a cemetery. He was on the third shift of a downtown foundry. He painted the Brown Hotel. He was on the custodial crew at the Medical Arts Building.

"All of those jobs reinforced my resolve to get a degree and improve my quality of life and use my mind rather than my back to make a living," Ransdell said. "In fact, those experiences sometimes cause me to have concern about the work ethic among some of our youth today."

"Today's world is even more complicated than that which I experienced. I've learned that success goes to those who are driven."

That was dad's influence, dad's shaping of Ransdell's values in life. Don was a hard-working man, a disciplinarian;

Ransdell didn't get away with mischief.

"My brother and I sometimes chuckle about his political views," Ransdell said before smiling. "He was very concerned about the decaying morality of our generation. That surely must've been tied to all that long hair and weird-looking clothes with which our young generation was preoccupied."

Anna Beth dedicated her entire life to shaping the values of Ransdell and his brother, sister and father. She was inspirational, and Ransdell loved her for that.

But Anna Beth grew ill toward the end of her life. Ransdell said it is now believed she suffered from Alzheimer's disease, but in 1971 there was no such thing. Anna Beth died at age 51.

Ransdell remembers the day vividly. The then-Western junior was in mass communications class when he was called out of the classroom and told of the news.

And this is where the story gets weird. Yes, presidents can be weird. This is where you discover that he's not President Ransdell, but Gary.

This is where he's standing in the cemetery with girlfriend Julie Bush, and the two are remembering his mother, about two hours after the funeral. This is where Gary pulls out this ring and asks Julie to marry him. Julie says yes, though "I'm not a cemetery person," she says.

Twenty-five years later, they're going strong and have two sons to brag about.

"I was fortunate to replace one lady of my life with another," Ransdell said.

Shortly after Ransdell took a job in Dallas to become director of Alumni Relations at Southern Methodist University in 1981, Don died of a heart attack. He was 76.

"That was his last parent," Julie said. "Both parents were gone. I've never had to suffer the loss of a parent yet."

So there is some of the road Ransdell has traveled. That road led him to and now back to Western.

The man wants to make the president. The president doesn't want to make the man.

"I hope we'll be plain ol' Gary and Julie with a dog that sheds on everybody," Julie Ransdell said. "That'll make everybody feel right at home."